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POETRY

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MELODY

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ALEXANDER GREEN

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Of Reformation Touching Church Discipline in England. Edited by W. T. HALE. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1916. Pp. lxxxix+224.

Studies in the Milton Tradition. By J. W. GOOD. (University of Illinois Studies in Language and Literature, Vol. I, Nos. 3 and 4.) Urbana, 1915. Pp. 310.

These additions to our critical understanding of Milton are as unlike in purpose and method as is humanly possible. One investigator has used his

surgical scalpel upon the minutiae of a single document; the other, to use his own phrase regarding certain eighteenth-century critics, has labored "with a sword in one hand and a commentary in the other" that he might prove Milton a constant influence upon English life and thought. The former shows how well Milton understood his own generation, while the latter displays in proper categories the critical estimates of others, taken from the documents of a hundred and fifty years.

Dr. Hale has edited *Of Reformation Touching Church Discipline in England* in a scholarly manner. His introduction forms a proper approach to the pamphlet, for it gives a clear survey of the religious background for Milton's first philippic against Episcopacy. The facts are well known, but they have never been presented with more simple clearness. A useful summary of the argument precedes the text, which is a faithful reproduction of the 1641 edition and its variants. The remainder of the book is devoted to well-documented notes, a glossary, and bibliography. This edition will be especially useful to scholars demanding a critical text of the pamphlet, and will also afford general readers easy access to its true meaning. The following typographical faults need correction: on p. 81, l. 25, read 1384 for 1284, and on p. 97 read 1627, 1635, and 1636 for 1827, 1835, and 1836, respectively.

The mass of material forming Dr. Good's study of the Milton tradition is too great for detailed analysis. Of chief interest are his methods of research, the new conclusions of permanent value, and the more evident errors in fact. An introductory chapter aptly displays the heavy stress of present criticism upon the eighteenth-century vogue of the *Minor Poems*, and ends with the assertion that *Paradise Lost* was of far greater consequence for the romantic phases of literary history. This is the central thesis of the book and one that affects deeply the conclusions of the author's various inquiries. Dr. Good has brought into union much evidence regarding the publication of Milton's works, some two hundred poetical tributes to his genius, the leading biographical opinions before 1801, formal literary criticisms for the same period, and the accidental contributions to his reputation of religious, political, and literary controversy. These may best be examined in turn.

The mathematical evidence of publication from 1637 to 1801 is clearly in favor of *Paradise Lost* and against all the other works of Milton. It appears that before 1801 (pp. 25-27) there were one hundred and thirty editions of the epic. This, or the total of one hundred and one given in the comparative summary (p. 49), surpasses the totals shown for the *Minor Poems*. These are listed variously. *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* were printed (p. 40), in all forms, including musical adaptations, "seventy-nine times up to the year 1801"; but the preceding table shows eighty entries, and another record (p. 49) gives the total of seventy-four. *Lycidas* (p. 38) had sixty-three issues during the same years, or (p. 49) sixty-eight. This

array of figures would be more emphatic if accompanied by facts regarding the number of copies in any edition after that of 1688. The list for *Paradise Lost* is not complete, nor is it accurate in its description of early editions; the excuse offered is that "at a distance of two centuries one can only hope for an approximate correctness, even in the most careful study of those early 'editions.'" Because of these facts the safe conclusion to draw from this record is that *Paradise Lost* was constantly popular up to the year 1801. Nothing further is evident.

The chapter of poetical tributes suffers similarly from incompleteness. Gray is well represented, but not by the famous lines from *The Progress of Poesy*. Dr. Dalton's *Prologue to Comus* (1738) is not printed, nor are other obscure selections, easily accessible in Todd's *Milton*. Even though all those given are reminiscent of Milton and his themes, they have little critical value without an accompanying interpretation in the light of personal interest or special occasion of writing. Imitation, a more sincere expression of esteem, could not have had full consideration here, but it deserves at least equal place with what at times is mere verbal recognition.

The succeeding chapters on biography and formal criticism contain more satisfying results of investigation. They show a careful reading of the critical reviews and give useful summaries of longer critical works dealing exclusively with Milton. A typical passage presents the causes leading to Dr. Johnson's ill-natured *Life*. The general drift of these chapters and of that on controversies is to the effect that Milton's ideas were constantly useful in religious and political disputes, and that out of such limited recognition evolved a true literary appreciation. The essays of Mr. Dowden and Professor Havens in the *British Academy* (1908) and in *Englische Studien* (1909) marked out the lines for these conclusions, but no one hitherto has carefully analyzed the record through to the close of the century. These summaries of opinion are admirably built up within the limits of an evolutionary conception to prove Milton an object of national regard.

The account of Milton's share in the romantic revival depreciates the *Minor Poems* in order to exalt *Paradise Lost*. This summary in behalf of Dr. Good's central thesis lacks most of the admitted facts regarding the influence of the earlier poems. In a previous chapter (p. 142) Dr. Good denies value to his own citations in high praise of the *Minor Poems*; there, in spite of prima facie evidence to the contrary, he sums up the popular attitude toward them from 1691 to 1730 as "one of comparative indifference." Here the topic is displaced by a study of the romantic elements of *Paradise Lost*.

The epic is shown to have affected both popular ideas of religion and formal theological doctrine. Its graphic descriptions made eternity a reality of belief, while the concrete depiction of individualistic revolt in Satan's character gave point to Milton's abstract prose discussions regarding

human liberty. It popularized narrative and descriptive poetry, and also gave body to the arguments for blank verse as against rhyming. These are positive additions to the Milton tradition.

Beyond this point, however, it is impossible to follow Dr. Good's exaltation of *Paradise Lost*. One suspects that men of that time drew moral guidance quite as much from their ponderous theologians and that the English Bible was another known source of the creation story. It is extravagant to say (p. 242) that "the romantic movement may almost be defined as a returning of the nation to the vision of Milton, with the aspirations that are consequent and correlated to his divine conceptions"; or that (p. 243) "upon eighteenth-century life his views fell with the weight of divine sanction." Such straining of a clear case makes the whole account seem uncritical. Without these embarrassments the evidence proves unmistakably that *Paradise Lost* had a continuous vogue, with specific relationship to the changes in English art and thought. Nowhere else is the book so free from the fault of being merely a compilation.

Space remains for only such errors of fact and of printing as may not be immediately evident. As noted above, the lists of editions in chap. ii are incomplete. "G. Hog" (p. 37 n.) is identical with "W. Hog" named elsewhere, being taken from the Latin form of "William" used in the title of Hog's edition. Other faulty Latin (p. 53, l. 22), *cincta* for *cuncta*, gives an amusing turn to Barrow's lines:

Qui legis Amissam Paradisum, grandia magni
Carmina Miltoni, quid nisi cuncta legis?

Also, the *Miltoni Epistola ad Pollionem* appears (p. 45) as *ad Pollio* and (p. 304) as *ad Polio*. A more important fact is that the poem was written, not by Milton—as Dr. Good asserts—but by William King (1685–1763). It is a satirical poem of two hundred and nine lines, not a prose letter, and was first issued in 1738. The list of Milton's prose works (pp. 43–44) lacks the *De Doctrina Christiana*, printed in 1825. Faulty quotation (pp. 53–54) of Marvell's poem published with the 1674 edition of *Paradise Lost* requires a change of "posts" for "post," l. 9; of "plume" for "plumes," l. 38; and of "The" for "A," l. 39. *Spectator No. 10* asserted that the paper had 60,000 readers when a week old, not (p. 155, n. 60) that that many copies were issued. Handel did not make *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* "a part of his *Samson Oratorio*" (p. 169), but formed them into a separate work with a third part, *il moderato*, by Jennens. It is not true that Gray "declared" (p. 183) "the world—obliged by fashion to admire" Milton; he was quoting the words of Warburton.

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